In the Claims:

Please amend the claims as indicated below. This listing of claims replaces all prior versions.

1-2. (canceled)

3. (currently amended) [[A]]For a semiconductor device that includes a semiconductor die having a circuit side and bulk silicon in a back side opposite the circuit side, a method~~, according to claim 2, wherein~~ for detecting a defect at a surface in the die, comprising:

locating a first beam splitter for optical manipulation relative to the back side of the semiconductor die;

directing light of a known wavelength at the beam splitter, wherein the first beam splitter is adapted to direct a first beam of light into the back side of the semiconductor die which reflects a [[the]] second beam of light back to the first beam splitter~~, and wherein the~~;

redirecting the second beam to a second beam splitter, the second beam splitter generating third and fourth beams of light;

analyzing the third and fourth beams of light, including comparing a relational factor that is a function of the two beams of light and is a function of a time differential, or intensity, between the third and fourth beams of light with a reference and detecting therefrom a surface defect in the die; and

using the first and second beam splitters to generate different third and fourth beams from a nondefective semiconductor and analyzing the different third and fourth beams of light to develop the reference.

4. (original) A method, according to claim 3, further including thinning the back side of the die before the steps of claim 1.

5. (original) A method, according to claim 4, wherein thinning the back side of the die includes locally thinning a portion of the back side of the die.

6. (original) A method, according to claim 4, wherein thinning the back side of the die includes locally thinning a portion of the back side of the die to a thickness of less than about 20 microns.

7. (canceled)

8. (currently amended) [[A]]For a semiconductor device that includes a semiconductor die having a circuit side and bulk silicon in a back side opposite the circuit side, a method~~, according to claim 1, wherein the~~ for detecting a defect at a surface in the die, comprising:

locating a first beam splitter for optical manipulation relative to the back side of the semiconductor die;

directing light of a known wavelength at the beam splitter, wherein the first beam splitter is adapted to direct a first beam of light into the back side of the semiconductor die which reflects a second beam of light back;

redirecting the second beam to a second beam splitter, the second beam splitter generating third and fourth beams of light; and

analyzing the third and fourth beams of light, including comparing a relational factor that is a function of the two beams of light and is a function of a time differential, or intensity, between the third and fourth beams of light with a reference and detecting therefrom a surface defect in the die.

9-15. (canceled)

16. (currently amended) A system~~, according to claim 11, wherein the~~ for detecting a defect in a semiconductor device that includes a semiconductor die having a circuit side and bulk silicon in a back side opposite the circuit side, comprising:

a first beam splitter adapted for optical manipulation relative to the back side of the semiconductor die;

a laser for directing light of a known wavelength at the first beam splitter, wherein the first beam splitter is adapted to direct a first beam of light into the back side of the semiconductor die which reflects a second beam of light back;

a second beam splitter for generating third and fourth beams of light in response to the second beam being a redirected; and

a processor adapted for analyzing the third and fourth beams of light, including comparing a relational factor that is a function of the two beams of light and is a function of a time differential, or intensity, between the third and fourth beams of light with a reference and detecting therefrom a surface defect in the die.